



Church Music Help Sheets

“O” Series – for Organists Organ Practice

O5

This sheet is intended to help organists who have had little or no tuition in organ playing, but who want to make the best use of their piano skills to play an organ (pipe or electronic) for Christian worship.

1. Practise as much as you can on the instrument you will be using for worship. If you do not already have easy access to the church, get your own key. Make friends with your instrument and learn what it can do for you. Note the tone “colours” the different stops provide and explore the functions of other knobs and levers. Find out how to control volume - foot pedal, knee lever, etc. If the mechanism is a balanced foot pedal, you will get best control if your whole foot - heel to toe - is on the pedal.

2. By all means supplement organ practice with practice on your piano at home if you have to, but -

- Keep your right foot on the floor. Pressure on the sustaining (“loud”) pedal of a piano assists legato playing by allowing a string to go on vibrating after your finger has left the key. The “sustain” mechanism of an electronic organ operates all the time or not at all and a pipe organ does not have such a mechanism. With both types of organ it is best to develop techniques for playing legato using your fingers only. (See Help Sheet O1.)
- At all times think of the tone “colours” of your organ and how you are going to use them when you play the same music on the organ.

3. Plan to practise for short periods frequently rather than for a long session on Saturday. Fatigue impedes the learning process, whereas rest (doing something else) allows the brain to consolidate what has been learned.

4. For the same reason, in your practice, do not plug away at the same piece of music for a long period of time. Leave it, do something else and come back to it - several times if necessary.

5. Practise the hymns for Sunday. This is where you interact most closely with the congregation and you need to make the singing a worshipful experience for them. (See Help Sheet O4.) Talk to your Minister or Priest about getting the hymn list for Sunday, if possible well before the weekend, so that you will be able to do your best on Sunday.

RSCM Australia (ACT Branch) wants to help the relatively untrained organist and can send a sympathetic adviser to spend an hour or two with you at the organ in your church. Contact the Secretary of the Branch:

Katharine Walker, 12 Renwick Street, Chifley, ACT 2606

Phone/Fax: 6281 6666; E-mail: <act.sec@rscmAustralia.org.au> to make arrangements.

Copies of any of these Help Sheets may be obtained from the Secretary of RSCM Australia, ACT Branch:
Katharine Walker, 12 Renwick Street, Chifley, ACT 2606
Phone/Fax 6281 6666; E-mail: act.sec@rscmaustralia.org.au

The ACT Branch has no objection to further copies of this Help Sheet being made for distribution to people who might be helped by them, provided they are made without amendment.